

Women of the West

4 Dec 1964

## Religion Brought Women Westward

(This is another in a Daily Herald series about women both saints and sinners) who were part of the early development of the Far West)

KATHRYN D. GROSBECK

BRIGHAM YOUNG'S COM-

MUNITY—Stalwart and courageous were the many Mormon women who arrived in "the valley" as part of Brigham Young's community, bringing with them as best they could the graces and amenities of a former life to give to the new land. They endured in covered wagons. Many walked across the plains, to be idealized in episodes of frontier life, pictured wearing sunbonnets, heads held high and eyes upon the horizon.

There were many women in the Mormon community, the one place in the West where women outnumbered the men. In many towns, especially new mining towns, there were often no women at all until dance hall girls and prostitutes moved in with a thought for easy money. California in 1850 had 12 men to every woman. But Utah, the polygamous territory, had women in good numbers, most of whom saw eye-to-eye as their leaders did.

Brigham Young's women were many. After his first wife died before he came West, he remained single for a number of years before he married Mary Ann Angel at Kirkland, Ohio. It was she who occupied the Mansion House or White House, as it was called, Brigham

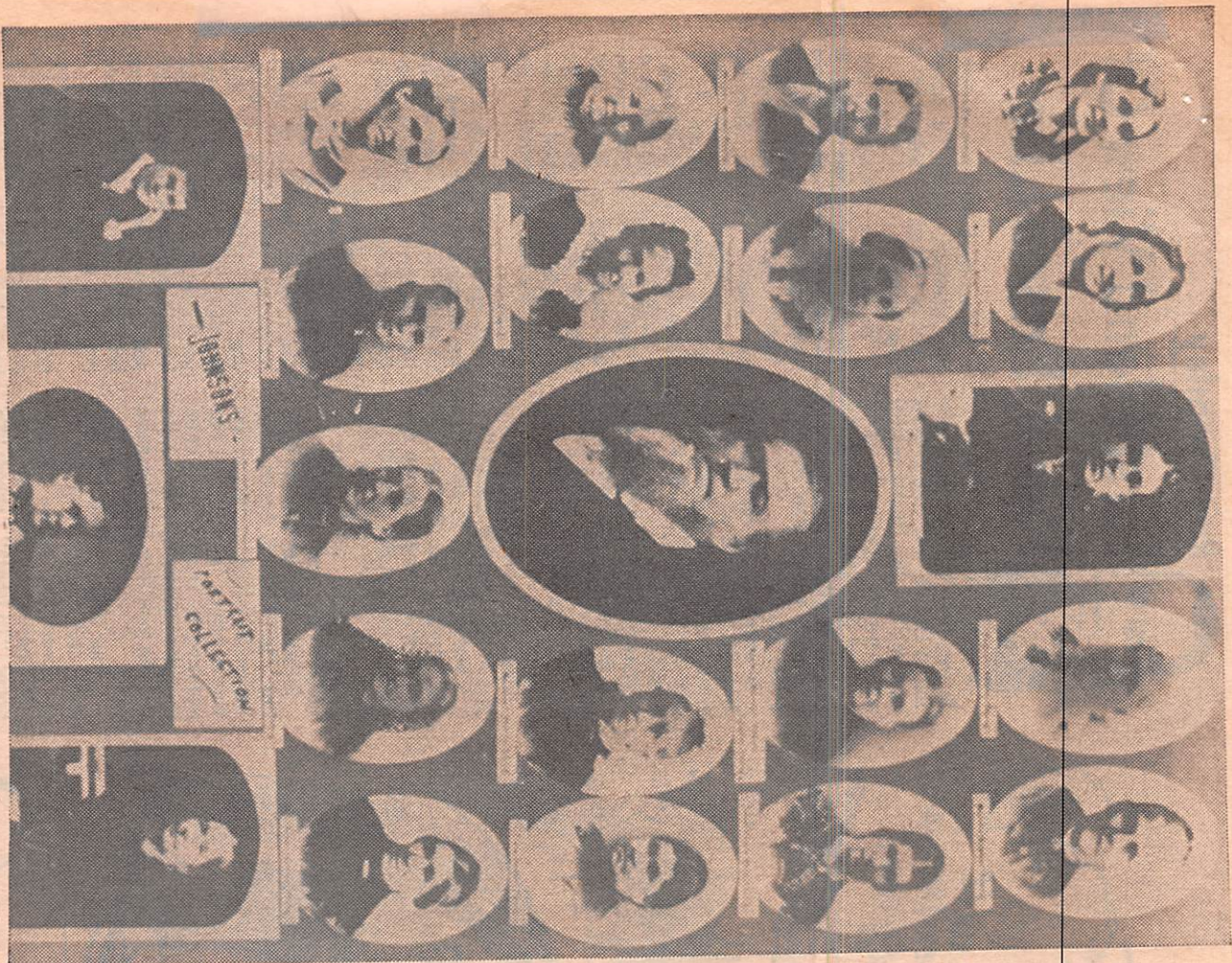
Young's first house built in Salt Lake City. His plural wives and their children occupied the other large houses he built, the Lion House and the Bee Hive House, solidly constructed homes, where communal living was made possible. For Amelia Folsom, whom he married in 1865, he built "Amelia's Palace," an ornate place in which he never was to live.

With the exception of Ann Eliza, his twenty-seventh wife, who sued him for divorce, all his wives including two more to wed after Eliza seemed to live peaceably together. Certainly no one was without company without something to occupy her in Brigham Young's households.

NARCISSA WHITMAN—In 1836 Narcissa Whitman and her Protestant medical missionary husband Marcus, accompanied by Henry and Eliza Spaulding, also missionaries, made their extraordinary and perilous journey over the Rocky Mountains to Oregon. There the treacherous Cayuse Indians failed to heed their teachings and in 1847 suddenly attacked the mission and killed 14 people.

Before that, after Narcissa's own child of three years had drowned, Narcissa had adopted orphans of recent arrivals and half-breed offspring of Indians and white trappers and with all her heart had cast herself into the care and salvation of the Cayuses, who seemed to love her.

Yet, on that fatal November



**POLYGAMIST WIVES**—Among the many women who came to the West in the pioneering days were those who were motivated by religion, including these 21 of the 27 wives of Brigham Young, LDS Church leader and colonizer.

Emma Hale  
(sister Bidamen)  
died @ Nauvoo  
30 Apr 1879  
B May 1879  
Bidamen